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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - ADDED NOFORN CAPTION

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [EAGR](#) [OA](#)
SUBJECT: VISIT OF QATAR'S PRIME MINISTER TO WASHINGTON
JANUARY 4-5

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Classified By: Ambassador Joseph E. LeBaron, for reasons 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (S) Prime Minister Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani (who serves concurrently as Foreign Minister) of Qatar will visit Washington beginning January 4 to continue the strategic consultations that Qatar and the USG have pursued since June, when Near Eastern Affairs Assistant Secretary Feltman first proposed them in Doha. As part of those consultations, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Ahmed Al-Mahmoud and Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs Mohamad Al-Rumaihi visited Washington last fall.

¶2. (S) The Prime Minister travels to Washington with the aim of laying the groundwork for visits in the first half of 2010 by Qatar's Heir Apparent and the Amir. We believe he will be prepared to discuss the gaps between the USG and GOQ on Middle East peace and counterterrorism cooperation, as well as to discuss setting the stage for joint cooperation on Iran, Iraq and other regional issues.

¶3. (S) Suggested talking points for meetings with the PM:

-- We thank you for bringing with you to Washington a commitment to fund the PA. Your decision to do so is extremely important to us. We view it as a clear gesture of friendship to us and of a commitment to partner with us on Fatah-Hamas reconciliation, just as the United States and Qatar have partnered on Darfur.

-- As your ally and friend, we hope we can look to you to increase your cooperation with us on counterterrorism. We want to work particularly closely with you and enacting policies and programs that deter financial flows to Hamas and the Taliban.

-- In this context, we applaud your work with the IMF on making needed legal and procedural changes to curtail financing to terrorists. We are ready to help you with technical support and training once the IMF and Qatar have worked out an action plan.

-- We especially value consultations with you on Iran. We recognize your national need for a working relationship with Iran, given the natural gas reserves you share with Iran. How best do you think we can persuade Iran to give up its military nuclear aims without military confrontation?

-- We understand that you are close to announcing a decision

to open an Embassy in Baghdad, but that much depends on resolving the issue of Iraq's debts to Qatar. Is there anything we can do to help?

-- We encourage you to recognize an independent Kosovo, as Saudi Arabia and others have now done. We certainly appreciate your votes in favor of Kosovo in the IMF and World Bank. They are important precursors to formal recognition, but when will you take that final step?

-- On Yemen, we know that President Saleh asked Qatar to stop its mediation between the central government and Huthi rebels. Given your past involvement there, what thoughts do you have on bringing about stability on the Arabian Peninsula?

-- We applaud Qatar's decision to make food security a priority, not just for itself but for the entire Arab world. Food security is a priority for the USG, as well, and we share Qatar's view that it must be addressed through a combination of commerce, investment, technical assistance, technology transfer, and direct aid.

Addressing the Fatah-Hamas Split and Funding the PA

14. (S) Prime Minister Hamad bin Jassim (HBJ) has told NEA A/S Feltman that he will come with a financial commitment to fund the Palestinian Authority. This is an extremely important gesture by Qatar to the United States. He will also be prepared to discuss with Secretary Clinton and others Qatar's view of Hamas, continued contacts with whose leaders it sees as key to bringing about a stable and enduring Middle East peace. We expect HBJ to share what other steps Qatar is prepared to take in support of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and, in particular, Mahmoud Abbas, whose continued leadership

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of the PA Qatar's leaders support. HBJ is likely to bring with him new ideas to reconcile Hamas and Fatah. Given Qatar's history of mediation efforts HBJ will no doubt suggest that Qatar can play a helpful role. Qatar's restoration of normal operations of the Israeli Trade Office in Doha would also give testimony to Qatar's willingness to help achieve U.S. objectives, but we do not expect the Qataris to take this step absent some significant gesture from the Israelis, such as much less restricted access to Gaza for Qatar's humanitarian efforts.

15. (S) Qatar almost certainly will not be willing to break off ties or dialogue with Hamas. If asked to do so, we think HBJ will explain that the Amir gave his word to both Hamas and Fatah that he would financially support the winner of democratic elections in Palestine. Hamas won those elections, which the Bush Administration pressed the Amir to support actively. The Amir believes that it would be dishonorable to isolate Hamas after he convinced its leaders to participate in elections that were backed by the United States.

Greater Cooperation on Counterterrorism Needed

16. (S) It is important to make clear to HBJ that cooperation between the United States and Qatar on counterterrorism issues in general needs to be greatly improved. Officials should make known USG concerns about the financial support to Hamas by Qatari charitable organizations and our concerns about the moral support Hamas receives from Yousef Al-Qaradawi. It is also essential to stress that high-level Qatari political support is needed, if financial flows to terrorists are to stop.

17. (S) An International Monetary Fund (IMF) employee began advising Qatar's Financial Intelligence Unit in October (in a

relationship expected to last three full years) on making the necessary legal and procedural changes to address the 49 areas in which international experts have recommended changes to Qatar's procedures. We assess that the FIU is serious about making technical changes that will enhance Qatar's reputation as a global financial center, but we project that, absent political support from the top, the IMF/Qatari partnership will fall short in achieving its goals.

Need for Close Consultations on Iran

¶18. (S) Qatar shares a mammoth natural gas field with Iran. As a result, Qatar carefully maintains with Iran a high tempo of top-level contacts, which have increased since the protests following Iranian presidential elections). Qatar does this because it is convinced that such a close relationship with Iran is key to safeguarding trillions of dollars in potential wealth. We are convinced that Qatar will not be dissuaded from maintaining those ties.

¶19. (S) That said, Qatar's leaders -- while careful not to say it publicly -- do not trust Iran; and Qatar does not want Iran to have nuclear weapons.

¶10. (S) Qatar's relationship with Iran is important to us for another reason. Qatar hosts the forward headquarters of CENTCOM and allows us to use Al-Udaid Air Base for unrestricted air operations over Iraq and Afghanistan. We pay no rent for these facilities, and the Qataris have funded about 60 percent of the improvements to Al-Udaid since our partnership on that base began. While few, least of all Qatar, want a military confrontation with Iran, the USG no doubt would want to use these Qatari facilities in any kinetic operations against Iran. Right now, we anticipate that Qatar would refuse to allow Qatari soil to be used to attack Iran, short of some sort of permanent USG security guarantee to Qatar, to include its offshore natural gas field shared with Iran.

Finding a Way Forward on Iraq

¶11. (S) For several months, Qatar has expressed frustration with the current government of Iraq, which it views as too Shi'a in orientation for its liking, but appears now to be prepared to consider investment offsets, provided by the Government of Iraq, but owned by Qatar, as a means for Iraq

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to repay the GOI's debt owed Qatar. That would be an avenue for the resumption of a political relationship, to include an HBJ visit to Baghdad and the opening of a Qatari Embassy in Iraq. We should encourage Qatar's outreach to Baghdad and also encourage Iraq's government to shore up its relations with Doha.

Recognizing Kosovo

¶12. (C) MFA Assistant Minister Mohamad Al-Rumaihi told Ambassador December 20 that Qatar's IMF and World Bank votes in favor of Kosovo show Qatar's true sympathies on recognizing Kosovo. The Russian President, however, has asked Qatar to "go slow" in announcing recognition, he said. Out of sensitivity to Russian concerns, Al-Rumaihi said, Qatar has done so. He encouraged Secretary Clinton to ask HBJ about the timing of Qatar's eventual recognition, noting that that Qatar had been approached by organizers of a UK project about using its good offices with the Government of Kosovo to protect Kosovo's Christian heritage once Qatar formally recognizes its independence.

Cool to Yemen's Approach on the Huthi

¶13. (S) Having attempted to mediate between Huthi rebels in Yemen and the central government there (before President Saleh put an end to Qatar's involvement), Qatar believes the Huthi tribes have legitimate grievances that the central government must address in dialogue and negotiations. It can be expected that HBJ will discourage a military approach to solving the Huthi problem and claim that the role of Huthi elements in supporting terrorism in the guise of Al-Qaida is overstated.

Food Security

¶14. (U) Qatar will host March 3-4, 2010 an international conference focused on food security in the Arab World. IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development) is a co-host, as is the Islamic Development Bank. The conference will have a set of ambitious goals, to include a conference declaration establishing a permanent secretariat to address the food security issues of the poorer states of the Arab League. According to officials of Texas A&M's Borlaug Institute, this will be the first such conference on regional food security issues hosted by an Arab government in the 50 years the institute has been active in the Middle East and North Africa.

¶15. (SBU) In Embassy Doha's judgment, Qatar's food security policies and strategies reflect the rapidly growing intent by the Amir and Crown Prince to make food security a key national priority for Qatar, not just in terms of Qatar's own food security needs, but in terms of the food security needs of the Arab region. (HBJ supports having an active food security policy, as long as it has a strong commercial focus.)

¶16. (SBU) That judgment stems from our conversations with Qatar government officials:

-- While QNFSP's short-term focus is on the State of Qatar and building the domestic agricultural sector to diminish reliance on imports, the strategic goal of QNFSP is to export the technologies developed in Qatar to countries throughout the MENA region, and other areas with arid climates.

-- Toward that end, some research results will be part of the public domain and available to everyone. Some technology transfer to poorer MENA nations will be donor-based, through the activities of the offices of the State Minister for International Cooperation. The third component of Qatar's strategic goal of exporting QNFSP technology will be more commercially based, and will employ public/private partnerships.

LeBaron